

BROOKLINE COUNCIL ON AGING
Minutes of the BOARD OF DIRECTORS meeting
Wednesday, March 13, 2013

The Brookline Council on Aging (COA) meeting was held at the Brookline Senior Center on Wednesday, March 13, 2013, at 1:00 pm. Present were:

- Board members: Peter Ames, Phyllis Bram, Judith Chasin, Nancy Daly, Ruthann Dobek, Irving B. Finn, Phil Fullerton, Jean Kramer, Celia Lascarides, Helen Lew, John Mulhane, Yolanda Rodriguez, Agnes Rogers, Miriam Sargon, Muriel Stark, and William Wong
- Staff: Judith Gimple
- Others: Jennie Brades, Jean Doherty, Carole Fullerton, Stacy Greenspan, Elaine Langenthal, Peter Latham, Sherry Lee, Mel Nash, Ed Richmond, and Barbara Scotto

COA chair Agnes Rogers called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm and asked for acceptance of the January meeting minutes. Acceptance was moved and seconded. She then called for Committee Reports.

Springwell Report (Helen Lew Reporting)

ECOP (Enhances Community Option Plan) wait list is very long, so long in fact that applicants for home care are dropping out. On March 12, the Springwell board lobbied the State House to increase funding and thereby reduce the wait time.

At this point Mrs. Rogers introduced Stacey Greenspan, proprietor of Make It Safe, who gave an impressive and very informative presentation on home safety and fall prevention—See Appendix A for a complete script of Mr. Greenspan’s presentation.

Director’s Report (Ruthann Dobek reporting)

Don’t miss:

The St. Patrick’s Day Concert following this meeting at 2:00 pm.

The meeting on extending on-street parking around the Senior Center at 3:00 pm.

The next COA meeting—on Wednesday, April 10—will combine with the annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon. Nominations for Volunteer of the Year are open.

On a sad note: Bob Roll has passed away, and Evelyn Roll is in hospital.

There will be a forum on *Models of Senior Housing Development* on Sunday, April 7, from 2:00 to 5:00 pm at the Holiday Inn on Beacon Street.

The annual *Rotary Pancake Breakfast* to benefit the Brookline food initiatives will be at the High School Cafeteria on Saturday, April 6, from 8:00 am to 12:00 noon.

On Sunday, April 14, The Senior Center Theater Club will host a performance of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Senior Center at 1:30 pm.

Stephen Bressler—Director of the Human Relations-Youth Resources Commission—will be retiring in April. Lloyd Gellineau will take on this position. Mr. Gellineau will also stay on in the Brookline Public Health Department and continue his involvement with the Age-Friendly and Hoarding commissions and the Domestic Violence Roundtable.

Give a big hand to Selectman Nancy Daly—our liaison with the Board of Selectmen. She is also liaison with the Age-Friendly Commission and the CDBG.

We are looking for funding to rehab the basement once the Fitness Center moves upstairs.

BrooklineCAN and the Age-Friendly Commission is working on snow removal and uneven sidewalks.

Budget Committee (Ruthann Dobek reporting)

During the next month there will be meetings. The Senior Center will emphasize protecting the \$7/elder funding

Mel Nash rose to mention that help was available from the State for low vision elders.

Mrs. Rogers then called for a motion to adjourn. This was moved, seconded, and the meeting ended at 2:00 pm.

The next COA meeting will be on Wednesday, April 10, at the Senior Center at approximately 1:00 pm, following the annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon.

Respectfully submitted,
Judith Gimple

Attachments:

Appendix A: Make It Safe Home Safety Presentation--script

APPENDIX A

Make It Safe Home Safety Presentation

Script

By Stacy Greenspan, Massachusetts General Contractor, Certified Aging in Place Specialist, Child Safety Specialist

Presentation Title: Fall and Injury Prevention around the House

Premise: The Safest place for our seniors should be the home—
unfortunately, quite often it isn't.

Text:

A slippery bathroom floor, stairways without adequate handrails, or poorly lit walkway—all are just a few of the household hazards that can cause a devastating fall injury.

The greatest tragedy is that **most falls are preventable!**

Some facts on falls:

- Falls are the leading cause of injury for those 65 years and older in the US.
- 1 in 3 seniors fall. About half in the home.
- About 66% of fall victims will fall again within 6 months.
- In the time it takes to watch this program over 200 older Americans will be seen in a hospital for an injury related to a fall.
- Projected health care cost related to falls is expected to reach \$ 54.9 billion by 2020.

The challenge:

- For seniors, a fall is the greatest threat to living independently at home.
- 83% of older Americans say they want to stay in their homes for the rest of their lives.
- But, most housing is over 20 years old and was never designed to meet the changing needs of families over a lifetime.

The good news is: Most falls are preventable!

According to the Centers for Disease Control “older Americans can remain independent and reduce their chances of falling by doing the following:

1. Exercise regularly to improve strength and balance
2. Ask their doctor or pharmacist to review medications
3. Have an eye exam at least once a year
4. Make their living environment safer

WELCOME TO THE SAFE HOME TOUR

THE SAFE HOME TOUR points out some common and not so well known household hazards. This presentation should not be a substitute for a comprehensive safety evaluation of your home.

COMING HOME

The pathway leading to the house should be well lit, with hard, smooth and even pavement - clear of clutter and obstacles such as ivy and ground cover.

Broken pavement is a recipe for injury and cannot be made safe. Remove and repave it. Believe it or not, it takes just ¼” to cause a fall!

Warped or loose boards on decks and porches are a major tripping hazard.

Steps along entrance pathways should have a handrail, ideally on both sides. Stair risers and treads should be of consistent height and depth to prevent tripping. Solid railings should be installed along all stairways. Handrails on both sides of the steps are best.

Outdoor motion sensor *lighting* adds safety and security in the evening. Solar cell lights are available.

Doors should not swing outward over stairs unless there is a proper landing.

Snow and ice on steps and pathways should be cleared with a chemical de-icing agent as soon as possible after a storm.

Nonskid tape or stair treads are a good way to improve traction on stairways indoors and out.

Entrances should be well lit at night. It's best to choose lighting fixtures with multiple light bulbs in case one fails.

A typical front entrance threshold can cause a tripping hazard. Up to 7¾" is allowed by code, but many older houses are higher. *A zero step entrance* is ideal because the floor surfaces on both sides are even.

There should be adequate space at all entrances to make it easier to get in the door, especially if assistance is needed.

A flat surface, for placing packages, should be located on the inside and outside of all house entrances.

Entrance locks, doorbells, and mailboxes should be easy to access and operate.

Doors should have a window or peephole to identify visitors.

INSIDE THE HOME

An interior door *threshold* should have a beveled slope beginning at ¼" off of the floor and be no more than ½" in height. In older homes thresholds are typically ¾". Older thresholds are a major tripping hazard and should be removed. If that isn't possible there should be a beveled transition edge added to both sides of the threshold to minimize tripping.

Beware of *spills*! Wipe them up immediately!

Avoid throw *rugs* that can slip or slide. Choose nonskid mats with low-profile edges.

Interior floor *walkways* should be uncluttered with even, nonglare lighting.

Changes in floor levels and top and bottom steps of staircases should be accented with nonslip reflective tape and well illuminated.

Rugs, other than wall-to-wall carpet, are a major trip and slip hazard and should be removed from passageways in the home.

Extension cords, lamp, telephone, and cable *wires* should be located away from walkways.

Furniture should be moved away from walking areas to prevent tripping.

Stairs without handrails are a hazard, especially if they contain winder steps. All stairs need a proper handrail, ideally on both sides and close enough to be grabbed simultaneously. Stairs should be clear of debris and illuminated with broad, even lighting.

Over*waxing* floors and wood stairs is a slipping hazard. Use a nonslip wax product instead.

Thick pile carpet runners can compress under weight at stair nosing and cause a fall.

THE BATHROOM

Wipe up *spills*!

Plumbing fixtures should be easy to operate with one hand. The tub and shower should have an antiscald valve.

Exposed *hot water pipes* should be insulated and water temperature adjusted to prevent scalding.

The *toilet* should be chair height (18½" from the floor) with toilet paper dispenser within easy reach and grab bar installed to aid in standing and sitting. An integrated paper holder and grab bar can provide increased stability at the toilet.

The *tub and shower* should be easy to get in and out of, with appropriate grab bar placed within the bathing enclosure.

Many manufacturers now offer *grab bars* that combine safety with good design. And there are many types available now.

There are many *transitions aids* available as well—floor to ceiling bars and bars that are anchored to the walls. Bathing is safer and easier with a transfer bench or a tub/shower seat. Some bathing seats put all bathing needs in safe reach, like a hand-held shower with multiple water controls.

Grab bars should be present to aid in transitioning. Never use an older ceramic soap dish, with a washcloth bar, as a bath grip. It can pull off the wall unexpectedly. Unless towel bars are designed to be used as grab bars, they should be located away from the tub or shower enclosure so they can't be mistakenly used for support.

Install nonskid material in the tub or shower floor. Use a bath mat with a nonslip backing.

In bathrooms or areas where water or dampness exists, install *GFCI* (ground fault circuit interrupters). They protect against shock or electrocution.

THE BEDROOM

Bedrooms located below grade or in basements must have a proper egress from each sleeping area.

Keep shoes and clutter away from walking passageways in the bedroom and throughout the rest of the house.

The bed should be a sufficient height. If it is necessary, install a grab pole or bed-can to aid in sitting, standing, or transitioning. Use bed guards and fall mats for added safety. There are a variety of portable transition devices available in many configurations.

Large bureaus and chests should be secured to wall studs. Be aware that the heaviest furniture can become unstable and topple when drawers are extended.

Pathways, particularly from the bed to the bathroom should be clear and illuminated with night lights, motion-sensor lighting, or general lighting. Portable, battery-operated motion lights are very useful for stairways at night.

Electronic hand-held transmitters aid in controlling lamps.

A reacher/grabber is handy to keep by the bed to retrieve objects from the floor.

THE LIVING ROOM

The living room should be clutter free and have adequate walking space around chairs and furniture. Coffee tables, chairs, and furniture should have contrasting colored surfaces for better visibility. Sofas and chairs should be an appropriate height. Transitions devices can aid in sitting and standing.

Windows should be easily accessible and operable in case of the need for emergency egress. Window glare is known to cause falls and should be minimized with blinds or drapery.

Good general *lighting* is important in every part of the house. Task lighting should be installed as needed to increase illumination.

THE KITCHEN

The kitchen can be a particularly dangerous place for the elderly. It is the source of most house fires, usually caused by a stove or cooking appliance left unattended. Faucets should be easy to operate. Appliance controls should be large and readable. Good general lighting and task lighting in the kitchen is important. Counters, work surfaces, wall and base cabinets should be at the right height and not cause excessive reaching. Roll-out shelving makes reaching easier.

If a step stool is needed, shop for one that is solidly built with good grasping rail(s).

Free-standing *stoves* should have an antitilt guard to prevent tilting away from the wall and thus causing spills from hot pots and liquids. Pots and pans on the stove top should have their handles facing toward the back wall (to avoid being *burn hazards*.)

When using the microwave, be aware that foods often heat unevenly. To prevent scalds, always stir foods well before serving.

Have an ABC-type fire extinguisher with a metal handle at an accessible location in the kitchen and *learn how to use it*. Never fight a fire if it is too large or if it is blocking your exit.

THE LAUNDRY

The washer/dryer should be at an appropriate height for better access. All laundry related materials should be within easy reach. Never use bleach and ammonia products together, they can produce deadly fumes. There should be a work table for setting laundry baskets and folding clothes. If there is a laundry sink in the room, a separate GFCI outlet should be present. If the laundry is near the furnace or boiler, take care not to hang clothing or allow dryer lint to come in contact with heating appliances.

A vinyl dryer duct is a fire hazard. Flexible metal duct traps lint. Use a 4" rigid steel duct vented to the outside, and clean it regularly. Never store flammable materials near the dryer.

THE GARAGE

There should be an adequate walkway on both sides of the parked cars. Check to make sure there is slippery no motor oil or other liquids on the floor. To make parking easier, hang a tennis ball down from the ceiling on a string. When the ball touches the windshield, the car will be far enough inside to close the garage door.

WARNING: Malfunctioning automatic garage doors can crush a child! Check and maintain the safety features of the doors and the door opener devices.

Garage door springs can break, causing injury. Install a safety wire inside the spring.

Do not store unsafe materials in a garage.

Have GFCI Outlets installed in the garage to protect against electric shock.

Never leave a car engine running in the garage!

IMPORTANT SAFETY TIPS

- Install a fire extinguisher in multiple areas of the home and know how to discharge it.
- Keep a working flashlight handy in several areas of the house in case of emergency or power outage.
- Install smoke alarms. Check local codes for the right type of detector and required location. Check them monthly and replace the batteries annually.
- Keep a fire ladder(s) within easy reach to serve all sleeping areas above the first floor. Make sure you know what to do in case of a fire or emergency.
- Talk to your local fire department about fire prevention and emergency evacuation procedures. Learn about fire safety.
- Have a practice fire drill. Do you know how you would get out of every room in your house? Designate a meeting area outside where all members of the household can gather. Never return to a burning structure.
- Insure that primary and storm windows are operable. Fix broken sash cords and lubricate window tracks periodically. Lives may depend on it.

- Every sleeping area must have at least one emergency and rescue window. Window openings should be at least 5.7 square feet.
- Plan the shortest egress routes out of the house. Ensure that passageways, stairs, and exit doors are not blocked and door and window hardware are operating correctly.
- Avoid double cylinder locks *inside* the home. Using a key in an emergency is a recipe for panic. All interior locks should have a simple thumb turn.
- Install rubber door knob grips or lever handles to improve door accessibility.
- Do not smoke in the house.
- Do not overload outlets. Overheating or arcing sparks can cause fires.
- Avoid using light-weight extension cords with multiple plug receptacles. Never use them for air conditioners or space heaters.
- Remove extension cords that are stapled to woodwork or placed under rugs or upholstery. They are a fire hazard.
- When you are using a multiple outlet strip, insure that it is of good quality with a short, heavy power cord. Only one outlet strip should be plugged into an outlet. Only use low amperage devices and appliances.
- Use the appropriately rated appliance cord for an appliance. Extension cords should be as short as possible. Longer cords can become hot.
- Be vigilant when using portable heaters. Follow manufacturer's instructions. Check *The Consumer Product Safety Commission* web site for safety and recall information.
- Check and replace electrical outlets that no longer hold plugs firmly. They can cause a dangerous electrical arc which can ignite flammable materials like drapes & bedding.
- Ask your electrician about installing Arc-Fault Circuit Breaks (AFCI breakers) in bedrooms. They are now required in new construction.

- Bare light bulbs in closets are a fire hazard. Replace them with glass-enclosed lights or fluorescent fixtures.
- Maintain heating and cooling systems. Do periodic maintenance and change AC filters regularly.
- Clean and maintain chimney flues. Check that chimney linings are sufficient for fireplaces and heating appliances.
- Install a carbon monoxide (CO) detector on every floor, and within 10' of all sleeping areas. They can be combined with smoke detectors. Replace units every five years.
- Mold can be dangerous to your health. Keep humidity levels low and ensure your home has good ventilation. Remove wet carpets and address leaky foundations and woodwork. Clean moldy surfaces.
- Store fire arms with trigger locks and store ammunition separately.
- Conduct a radon test of your home.

ACCESSIBILITY MODIFICATIONS: Estimated costs

- Zero clearance entrances and ramps. Aluminum ramps cost about \$155 per foot.
- Continuous secondary handrails (1½" round railings are recommended). A typical installation is \$400-\$800.
- Portable ramps. \$150-\$250.
- Wheel chair lifts for vans. Cost is about \$2500.
- Entrance lifts. Cost is about \$5000.
- Automatic garage door openers typically cost about \$1200, installed.
- Elevators. \$12,000-\$100,000.
- Stairlifts:
 - Straight—\$3200-\$5000 installed.
 - Curved—\$8000+.
- Swing-away hinges and door widening:
 - Hinges installed—around \$275.
 - Interior door replacement--\$575-\$700.
- Hallway handrails—typically \$375 per 10 feet.
- Typical accessible upgrades:

- Bathroom—\$11,000.
- Kitchen—\$23,000.
- Comfort-level toilet with installation: \$480-\$600.
- Tub cuts: typically \$1250.
- Walk-in tubs: typically \$5000 installed.
- Roll-in showers: around \$5800.

BUYER BEWARE: Installing a new tub, shower or plumbing fixture may require replacing older rough plumbing if it does not comply with current code. Make sure your get an estimate for this additional work *before* signing a contract.

STAY SAFE in your Home Sweet Home!

